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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 001972

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: URUMQI CALM -- JULY 13 SITREP

REF: BEIJING 1954

Classified By: Acting Political Section Chief
Ben Moeling. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) Urumqi and Kashgar remained calm July 11-13, according to a U.S. Embassy team on the ground there, with no reports of new violence. The government July 11 revised the official death toll upward to 184 and provided an ethnic breakdown which showed that three quarters of the riot fatalities were Han. Official Chinese media, however, did not report the ethnicity of the dead (Chinese officials have described the numbers as "too sensitive" to show domestic audiences). The death toll may continue to rise, as Chinese officials have characterized more than 70 of the wounded as "near death." Urumqi PSB July 13 returned the passport of an Amcit who was detained briefly following the riot. The Amcit, who had his passport confiscated after PSB spotted him taking pictures of the riot aftermath, has since departed for Beijing. Two mid-level Xinjiang officials visited the Embassy July 10 as part of a previously arranged USG exchange program. The two remarked that the reasons for the riots were "complex" but the Uighurs who committed violence against Han July 5 represent only a small minority. Hinting at Han resentment, one of the officials said the government should rethink policies exempting Uighurs from the one-child policy and granting them preferential university admission. End Summary.

Calm in Kashgar and Urumqi

2. (C) Post heard no reports of additional violence in Urumqi or other communities in Xinjiang July 11-13. A team from the Embassy Defense Attache Office reported July 13 from Urumqi that the situation in the city appeared to be stabilizing, with more shops open in the ethnic Uighur section of the city. PSB foot patrols have been replaced with smaller patrols by ethnic Uighur officers. Significant numbers of PAP troops remain in and around Uighur neighborhoods. The DAO team spent July 11-12 in Kashgar, which was quiet over the weekend. The security presence in Kashgar was significantly less dense and less numerous than that observed in Urumqi. The one exception was at the Sunday Market on the east side of Kashgar, which was surrounded by approximately 300 PAP troops. The market was open July 12, but only half of the stalls were open.

Foreigners, including the DAO team members, were able to travel around the city without hindrance, however, Public Security Bureau roadblocks were blocking access to most of the countryside.

Officials Raise Death Toll to 184

13. (C) Xinjiang officials on July 11 raised the death toll from 156 to 184. Authorities also revised the number of injured to 1,680. On July 12, according to media reports, Xinjiang Chairman Nur Berkri announced that of the 939 injured who remain in the hospital, 216 are seriously injured and Berkri warned the death toll could go higher. For the first time July 11, the government released an ethnic breakdown of the 184 dead: 137 Han, 46 Uighurs, and one ethnic Hui. This ethnic breakdown was reported in China Daily, an official English-language newspaper, but has not been mentioned in the PRC's Chinese-language press. Nevertheless, these figures have been reported in several Chinese blogs and Internet chat rooms. (Note: MFA officials told A/DCM July 10 that the ethnic breakdown of the dead was too sensitive to release domestically because the high number of Han dead could lead to further reprisals, see Ref A.) Weekend media coverage in the Chinese press highlighted government financial assistance to victims, including payments of compensation and funeral expenses of RMB 210,000 (USD 31,000) to the family of each victim.

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American Riot Witness Departs Urumqi

14. (SBU) Adam Grode, a former Fulbright scholar who was briefly detained by the Urumqi PSB following the July 5 riot, received his passport back from the PSB July 13. Grode, who provided an account of the riot to several western journalists and was detained after PSB officers spotted him taking photos of the aftermath, departed for Beijing in the afternoon. Post's American Citizen Services Unit has contacted 83 Americans in Xinjiang since July 6 (53 in Urumqi and 13 in Kashgar and other cities). All reported that they were safe and 17 have since departed Xinjiang.

Xinjiang Officials on "Complex" Reason for Riots

15. (C) On July 10, ConOff spoke to two Xinjiang officials: Ren Xinjun, Director of the Xinjiang Foreign Affairs Office Protocol Office, and Zheng Ping, Vice President of the Xinjiang Women's Federation (protect both). Ren and Zheng, both Han officials who were born and raised in Urumqi, visited the Embassy on their way to participate in a IVLP program in the United States. Both left Urumqi on July 6, immediately after the first wave of rioting July 5. Both Ren and Zheng were visibly disturbed and saddened by the violence and deaths. Zheng said that a former director at the Women's Federation, a 65-year-old Han woman, was beaten to death July 5 on her way to a medical appointment. While the June 26 factory brawl in Shaoguan, Guangdong Province was a factor in starting the violence, the real reasons, Zheng said, were "complex." The July 5 rioters were young and irrational, Zheng added, and represented a small percentage of the total Uighur population. Ren said the government should review its ethnic affairs policy of giving special advantages to minorities such as exemption from the one-child policy and preferential university admission. Such policies

are "not working," Ren asserted. Both noted that Xinjiang authorities had been transparent with the media. This, Ren and Zheng said, showed that China had learned from the Tibet unrest of March 2008.

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